



ORMSKIRK & WEST LANCASHIRE NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

'LOCKDOWN' NEWSLETTER

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What have you all been up to? Any chat, photos, news, recent acquisitions etc. by members for future issues please!

UNCERTAIN TIMES AHEAD

THE LAST MONTH has seen a significant increase in the number of people infected with Coronavirus, with daily figures reflecting those at the height of the pandemic.

There is no doubt that the government's vaccination programme has had a noticeable effect in reducing the number of hospital admissions, yet infection rates still keep rising. Another worrying fact is that certain vulnerable people who, despite having received both jabs and a booster, still ended up in hospital. It had been hoped that by January it would be safe enough to start regular meetings, with a low key Christmas get-together before that. However, doctors generally are now urging the government to bring back stricter rules about public gatherings, the wearing of face masks and social distancing.

Bearing all this in mind it might be foolhardy to risk a meeting in the close confines of the room at the *Eagle & Child* just yet. After enduring the restrictions of the last two years it would be a shame to risk everything for the sake of an early meeting. Having spoken to a number of our members the majority opinion seems to be that of caution. It is now a case of wait-and-see how the situation develops over the next few weeks.

It's not all bad news. The stay at home restrictions of the lockdown periods seem to have re-kindled peoples' interest in coins and tokens. As a result of which we now have three new members waiting in the wings for meetings to resume! I try to keep their interest going by sending Lockdown Newsletters each month and these appear to be well received. With a date for the resumption of our regular meetings being constantly pushed back means this newsletter looks like having a longer life than anticipated nineteen months ago. As always, contributions are most welcome on any numismatic subject or query.

A BOX OF DELIGHTS

It's always exciting to be shown a box of assorted coins that have been in a family for generations. There's that anticipation it might contain a super rarity – although more often than not it doesn't.

However, when a vintage sweet tin was opened by Mr. Wentworth Beaumont at his family home of Bywell Hall in Northumberland he certainly hit the jackpot! Amongst the assortment of coins was an early American shilling struck by the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The coin will be auctioned next month and could fetch £150,000 – £200,000.



Mr. Beaumont, an art adviser, said the old confectionery tin had been found in the hall's study. He had never noticed it before and thought it was just a random collection of old coinage. Mr Beaumont is descended from William Wentworth, who was known to have visited New England in 1636. Other notable coins in the accumulation were a Massachusetts 'Pine Tree' shilling, a bronze 'Libertas Americana' medal and several English hammered gold coins including a Commonwealth of England gold unite. Even without the early Massachusetts shilling, which although a great rarity is rather unimpressive visually, the tin was a virtual treasure trove of numismatic delight.

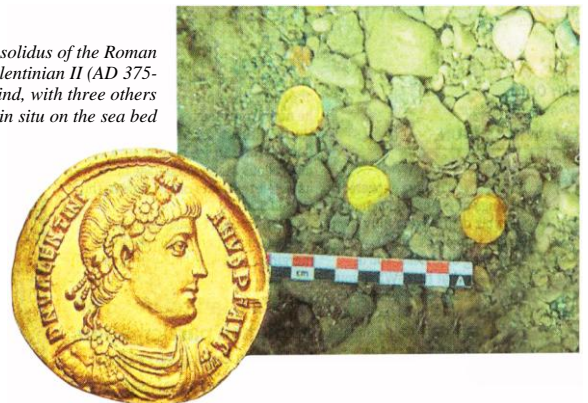
UNDERWATER ROMAN TREASURE

For 1,500 years, the seabed of the island of Portitxol in Xàbia has sheltered one of the largest collections of Roman gold coins found in Spain and Europe.

It consists of 53 Roman coins which, after being analysed by scientists from the University of Alicante Research Institute in Archaeology and Historical Heritage (INAPH), have been dated to the late Roman period, in particular between the end of the 4th century and the beginning of the 5th century AD.

Their perfect state of preservation, which even allows us to read the inscriptions, identifies them as coins from the periods of government of these Roman emperors: Valentinian I (3 coins), Valentinian II (7 coins), Theodosius I (15 coins), Arcadius (17 coins), Honorius (10 coins) and an unidentified coin. It was a chance discovery of 8 coins by two amateur freedivers – Luis Lens and César Gimeno – that triggered the system that the Directorate General for Culture and Heritage has in place for these cases. From that moment on, archaeologists from the University of Alicante and the Spanish Civil Guard Special Underwater Brigade (GEAS), in collaboration with the Town Council of Xàbia, carried out several dives in the area which resulted in the discovery of 53 gold coins and three nails -probably copper- as well as some very deteriorated lead remains which, according to all indications, could belong to a sea chest.

A gold solidus of the Roman emperor Valentinian II (AD 375-392) from the find, with three others in situ on the sea bed



This is one of the largest sets of Roman gold coins found in Spain and Europe, as stated by Professor in Ancient History Jaime Molina and University of Alicante team leader of the underwater archaeologists working on the wreck. He also reported that this is an exceptional archaeological and historical find, since it can offer a multitude of new information to understand the final phase of the fall of the Western Roman Empire. The historians point to the possibility that the coins may have been intentionally hidden, in a context of looting such as those perpetrated by the Alans in the area at that time.

Therefore, the find would serve to illustrate an historical moment of extreme insecurity with the violent arrival of the barbarian peoples (Suevi, Vandals and Alans) in Hispania and the final end of the Roman Empire in the Iberian Peninsula from 409 AD.

In order to continue investigating the area, the Valencian Government has allocated a budget of €17,800 to carry out underwater excavations in the area of the discovery. The campaign will be led by the same team currently leading the General Research Plan for Underwater Archaeology (Archaeological Prospecting of Portitxol in Xàbia), in which both the University of Alicante and the Museum of Xàbia are participating. The bay of Portitxol in Xàbia is an area well known for the abundance of underwater archaeological remains currently under study. Anchors, amphorae cargoes, ceramic remains from different periods, metallic material, elements associated with ancient navigation, etc. have been rescued to date in the various archaeological surveys promoted by the City Council, the University of Alicante and the Valencian Government since 2019.

A FRENCH HOUSE FULL OF SECRETS

A hoard of French gold coins from the 17th century has been discovered in a box embedded in the wall of a remote house in Brittany. Stonemasons discovered the small box hidden in the wall of the house whilst they were working on renovations. When they opened the box, coins bearing the head of Louis XIII and Louis XIV just tumbled out. But that wasn't the end of the story as a few days later the workmen found a purse containing more coins hidden above a beam. In total the hoard comprised 239 gold coins. The oldest part of the house dates back to the 13th century and would have belonged to a family of wealthy traders or farmers. Remarkably, the coins were minted in nineteen different cities throughout France. Notable coins in the find included a Louis XIV Double Louis d'or of 1646 and a Louis XIII d'or with a Templar cross, dated 1640. The coins are to be auctioned.



COIN QUIZ No.19

QUESTION 1. What are 'Dassier' medaletes and why were they made?

QUESTION 2. What Anglo-Saxon and Norman mint town is shown as 'SCROB' on silver pennies?

QUESTION 3. In what year was the first £1 treasury note issued in England?

QUESTION 4. Which three monarchs issued a silver threehalfpence coin?

QUESTION 5. Whose image is the seated female on the reverse of a denarius (known as the 'tribute penny') of the Roman emperor Tiberius?

QUESTION 6. When was the first silver sixpence issued?

QUESTION 7. What is the common name for a Roman double-denarius?

QUESTION 8. What are 'peck marks' on late Anglo-Saxon coins?

ANSWERS (Quiz No.18)

Q1. Benedito Pistrucci was most famous for his design of St. George and the dragon on crown reverses.

Q2. A coin is said to be striated when it is marked with a number of lines or streaks.

Q3. Spintria tokens were obscene medalets used as brothel tokens.

Q4. Gold triple unites were struck by Charles I in Oxford during the Civil Wars and used mainly to reward the high ranking military.

Q5. Tin farthings and halfpennies and the 'rose' farthings of Charles I all have a copper plug or wedge.

Q6. Hans Krauwinkel, and his sons after him, is best known for producing the numerous Nuremberg base metal jettons.

Q7. The LIMA marked coins of George II are dated 1745 and 1746.

Q8. The first official coronation medal was struck for Edward VI in 1547.

Q9. The famous British numismatist is Edward Hawkins (1780-1867). Hawkins is an English numismatist and antiquary, Keeper of Antiquities at the British Museum and author of a number of books, most famously his 'The Silver Coins of England' (1841). A standard reference work.



QUESTION 9.
Can you name this famous politician and numismatist?



USELESS COIN FACTS No.19

The copper coinage of King George V is still popular with coin collectors, as it is readily available and apart from the 1933 penny, doesn't have any extreme rarities, except that it is for condition. When George V ascended the throne in 1911 the Royal Mint didn't have a Chief Engraver, so the design of the obverse for the penny, halfpenny and farthing – as well as all other denominations, was the result of a competition. The winner was an Australian by the name of Bertram Mackennal whose initials B.M. appear on the truncated neck of the king's profile portrait. Another fact about the bronze coinage of this reign is that with each of the three denominations having Britannia on the reverse sailors during WW1 regarded having a copper coin in your pocket as a good luck charm. After the war the demand for bronze coins was really high and the mint couldn't cope, so in addition to Heaton's they also employed a Birmingham based armourer The Kings Norton Metal Co., who had supplied the army during the war, to switch to striking pennies for general circulation in 1918 and 1919, each marked with a tiny KN in the left hand corner of the exergue on the reverse. These coins are scarce in high grades.

CHINESE FAKES TO LOOK OUT FOR

Coin forgeries coming out of China are becoming ever more accurate and sophisticated. Some are really difficult to detect, so here is a list of the most common types to watch out for: Henry VIII groats (2nd coinage), 1763 Northumberland shilling, Gothic crown (has a milled edge), 1798 guineas, Victorian crowns (1887 to 1900), George III halfcrowns dated 1818 and 1819. All appear to be about EF and are offered far too cheap!

'LUCKY' FARTHING DISCOVERED

A 127-year-old farthing has been discovered under the mast of Lord Nelson's flagship, HMS Victory. The Victorian-era coin, which was found when the mast was removed for restoration work, was placed there for good luck.



The 1894 bronze farthing – rather the worse for wear

It dates to 1894, the year a set of masts were installed on the ship after the previous ones became rotten. HMS Victory's principal heritage adviser Rosemary Thornber called the coin "invaluable". In its day it was worth a quarter of a penny, and now would have a value of 0.1p. The now-corroded coin once showed Queen Victoria's head on one side, and Britannia on the other, with a lighthouse in the background. The tradition of placing coins under ships' masts dates back to Roman times and still continues today.

It was found by Diana Davis, head of conservation at the National Museum of the Royal Navy (NMRN).

"I removed as much of the corrosion as possible without damaging the patinated copper alloy surface," she explained. She added "the impact of the mast with upwards of 21 tonnes resting on it" caused damage but she said she was able to clean it enough to uncover the lighthouse on its surface.



HMS Victory in Portsmouth dry dock

"It's been one of the more unusual projects I've worked on - being the first person to see the coin in over 120 years," she added. Ms Thornber said: "We had wondered if there would be a coin under the mast, to follow with naval tradition, and imagine our excitement when the coin was found and news rapidly spread through the team, who were sworn to secrecy whilst we conserved it and made plans to put it on display. "She added "on paper it's not particularly rare" but "it occupied such an intriguing place for so many decades, and now its imprint is part of Victory's fabric". The coin is now on display to mark Trafalgar Day at the NMRN, next to Victory's dry dock at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard.

A TOKEN QUERY

Eric Hodge

In W.J. Davis's 'The Nineteenth Century Token Coinage' from page 143, is listed a number of paper and metal tokens issued by the 'Overseers of the Birmingham Workhouse'. These are in a variety of values and metals. I wish to make specific mention of two of these: - No. 2 in silver at 2/6 on page 143 (Fig. 1) and No. 24 in copper at 2/6 on page 146 (Fig. 2). I have recently discovered a note in the *Seaby Coin & Medal Bulletin* for August 1978 page 241. I quote this note in full below.



Fig.1, suspected forgery of a 2/6d Birmingham Workhouse token in silver

Fig.2 Suspected forgery of 2/6d Birmingham Workhouse token in copper

Forgery of Birmingham Workhouse 2/6 Silver Token. By James Mays. During recent research in the Birmingham Public Library I came across an advertisement in the August 17th, 1812, issue of the Birmingham Gazette which suggests that the 2/6 variety of the Birmingham Workhouse series of silver tokens is a forgery. The advertisement reads:

The Overseers of Birmingham having discovered that Silver Tokens of Two Shillings and Sixpence have been circulated in distant counties, resembling the Birmingham shilling Tokens, purporting to be payable at their Workhouse, the intrinsic value of which is only about 2s 2d.-they inform the public that they never have issued Tokens of 2s 6d. nor any of a higher value than 1s. which were issued for Convenience, not Profit, and are intrinsically worth upwards of eleven pence; and since notice was given of a Bill being intended to be brought into Parliament to limit the Time for Circulation of Tokens, they ceased to issue any more.

Neither W.J. Davis nor Richard Dalton, in their standard works, list the 2/6 as a forgery or suspected forgery, and it is assumed that the token's authenticity was not doubted. A.W. Waters, in his 'Notes on the Silver Token Coinage of the Nineteenth Century', treats the coin as a Genuine Trade Token, and even attributes the die to Wyon, although he may merely have repeated Davis' note to this effect. The 2/6 Workhouse token may well have been struck at one of the Birmingham mints, but the advertisement suggests that those who put it in circulation did so in "distant counties". Was the 2/6 piece a "spite token" of Henry Morgan's, or from a mint which failed to win the tender for the authentic Birmingham Workhouse tokens? One can only speculate on these possibilities at present. What is known is that very few were struck and forgeries or not, the Birmingham Workhouse 2/6 pieces remain among the rarest of the 1811-12 silver token series.

I write as an interested spectator, not having any real knowledge of this series. My query is, has Mr. Mays' note altered current thinking on the genuineness of Birmingham Workhouse 2/6 tokens? He only refers to the silver 2/6, but as shown above they also existed in copper.

.... AND YET MORE LIBRARY MUSINGS

Eric Hodge

I have always found numismatic auction catalogues a wonderful source of unsolicited information. Not only is there a description of the object, coin, medallion etc but often there are further details of where the object is from with, sometimes, detailed provenance of ownership and then possibly some historical detail of the event portrayed on or by the object. The ultimate magic words, of course, are 'worthy of further research' to set the pulses beating.

Purely at random I have selected a DNW coin auction for 17th March 2004, lot 1248 (Fig. 1). This historical medal shows John Kendal. Ever heard of him? The medal was of Italian origin. John Kendal was Turcopolier (Colonel General of Infantry) at the time of the siege of Rhodes by the Turks commencing on 23rd May 1480 by 160 ships and 70,000 men. The post was annexed to that of Grand Bailiff of England. He was also Prior of the Order of St. John in London and Grand Master, and the task of recruiting for troops, especially in Ireland, to fight the Turks fell to him. On 17th August 1480 the Ottoman fleet gave up their

attempt to capture Rhodes. The medal was estimated to fetch £100-200 but the bidding finished at £800. Someone was very pleased to make further acquaintance with Mr. Kendal. Interestingly a similar medal appeared as lot 914 in London Coin Auction 162 for 1st September 2018 where is written 'Eimer states this is the first medal to honour an Englishman.'



Fig. 1, Historical medal of John Kendal

St. James's Auctions number 37 for 27th June 2016 included a collection of engraved coins. This is always an area of research and sometimes horrific information. Lot 423 (Fig. 2) is a case in point.

Thomas Thrush, a convict of the Second Fleet is shown on a Georgian halfpenny, smoothed and engraved both sides: he stands, hand in pocket, arm outstretched, wearing shackles from waist to ankles, rev. Thomas Thrush Cast Dec 10th 1788. Thomas Thrush was sentenced to life in Middlesex. The Second Fleet comprised six ships and is remembered for the loss of one of these ships carrying provisions and for the deaths of 278 convicts from the harsh conditions. The Sydney Cove Chronicle of 30 June 1790 recorded 'As they came on shore, these wretched people were hardly able to move hand or foot. Such as could not carry themselves upon their legs, crawled upon all fours.....A sight most outrageous to our eyes were the marks of leg irons upon the convicts, some so deep that one could nigh on see the bones.....'.



Fig 2, Smoothed and engraved halfpenny featuring Thomas Thrush

To finish I turn to Glendining's for 2nd October 1996 lot 490 described as 'Norway, a very important and well made medieval seal... for Finn Gautsson, one of the signatories of the Treaty of Perth 1266. How many of us know, or have even heard of, this Treaty? Apparently it ceded the Isle of Man, the Hebrides and Orkney to Scotland. Before the middle of the 12th century these islands were under the suzerainty of the Kings of Norway. After 1217 this control became more assertive leading to an inevitable clash with the growing power of Scotland, who in 1261 sent envoys from Alexander III to negotiate. These were unsuccessful and hostilities began. These ended with the defeat of the Norwegian fleet at Largs in 1263. Three years later in 1266 the Treaty of Perth was signed and the islands were sold by Norway to Scotland. We talked about further research, but as my time is up I must leave it to the reader to find out how the Isle of Man eventually reverted to the English Crown.

BANKSY OR PISTRUCCI ?

In recent years the auction hammer price for rare coins has broken all records. So who is buying all these classic rarities and thereby forcing the market up for more lowly specimens? The answer is twofold. First the internet has made coins instantly available worldwide. Then of course it has been calculated that there is now over 2000 multi-billionaires worldwide plus countless numbers of millionaires. It only takes a few of these players to take an interest in numismatics and the world market in coins goes through the roof.

Coins are one of the few 'art' items that are easily transportable, in fact they even fit in your pocket! This makes them very attractive as an investment cum money laundering or security proposition. When a shredded Banksy stencil print sells for £18.5m who wouldn't prefer to own the equivalent value in a collection of superb and rare coins?

THE BOAR'S HEAD PUB TOKEN

Peter Thompson

The Boar's Head at Standish is one of the country's oldest pubs, a plaque on the front door noting that the present inn was built about 1450 and is a grade II listed building (figure 1). It is likely though that an inn had occupied this site for many years before that owing its popularity and longevity to its position on the road north from Wigan towards Preston and Lancaster on the one hand and Chorley on the other. A local railway station, also known as Boar's Head, gave it additional importance from the mid-19th century. All old pubs worth their salt are of course haunted, the Boars Head being doubly blessed with one ghost in the cellar and another in the billiard room.



The Boar's Head pub at Standish, near Wigan

At some time, probably in the late 19th century, the Boar's Head issued a very plain pub check with the value 2d on the reverse (figure 2). A recent sale (Simmons Gallery Mail Bid Sale 100) contained a similar check but with a blank reverse that this writer had never seen before (figure 3). However, an expert in the field, Andrew Cunningham, was able to supply some very interesting information. Some years ago a hoard of these checks came to light which contained examples of both types; the twopence and the check with no value.



Fig.2



Fig.1

The fact that both varieties were found together indicates that they were probably both in use at the same time but there are several differences between the two varieties other than the obvious value/no value reverses. Both are the same diameter but the check with no value has a thicker, heavier flan (7.40g) than the twopence (6.18g). The heavier check has a plain edge and a beaded rim on the reverse while the twopence has an upright grained edge and a plain rim on the reverse. Both obverses appear to be exactly the same.



Fig.3

It is this writer's opinion that the two varieties represent two separate issues and that the heavier type was likely to have been issued first. The value (2d) was probably added to the second issue to clear up any confusion there may have been concerning its value. Thankfully the Boar's Head has survived the pandemic and appears to be flourishing. It is well worth a visit.

WAKEFIELD COIN FAIR RESURRECTED

The popular Wakefield monthly coin fair is up and running again, but with a temporary change of venue to Huddersfield (slightly nearer). It is still held on the last Sunday of every month and could be well worth a day out. Venue and times are published on line and in *Coin News*.

THE TWO HENRYS DEBATE

Alan Dawson

A question that has divided numismatic opinion for many years has been where to place the cut off point between the silver coinage of Henry IV and that of Henry V. The debate received new impetus with the publication of Lord Stewartby's book *English Coins 1180-1551* in which he suggests that the true coinage of Henry V only started with the introduction of the distinguishing feature of a mullet on the king's breast on groats in class C.. This would seemingly then place all preceding issues (class A and B) firmly in the reign of his predecessor Henry IV.



Henry IV groat, class 3, with slipped trefoil next to mintmark on obverse



Henry V groat, class A, obverse, so-called 'emaciated bust' type

Stewartby's reasoning behind this statement appears to have been based on a decree by parliament that in Easter 1412 a somewhat experimental weight reduction of the coinage would be tried for two years, then discontinued if proved to be unsatisfactory. Potter, writing in 1960, pointed out that the change to the coinage was marked in more ways than just weight. A slipped trefoil on the breast and in the legends was also a feature of this period, plus an annulet or pellet by the crown. The use of these symbols or privy marks on Henry V's groats of class A strengthened Potter's view that these coins should be re-allocated to the last years of Henry IV's reign.



Henry V groat, class B, the so-called 'scowling bust' type.



Henry V groat, class C, with mullet on the king's breast



All coins presently attributed to Henry IV are rare. The Tower mint had been inactive since Michaelmas 1408 with skilled mint staff dismissed. New dies saw considerable variation in style and were quite crude in execution. By September 1412 the mint finally decided to recruit skilled engravers, moneyers and die sinkers from continental Europe. The dies they produced were the same size as in the past, but the new flans for the reduced weight coinage were small. This resulted in freshly minted coins looking as if they had been clipped. Despite this problem the new dies continued to be used well into the reign of Henry V which is the root cause of the numismatic problem of reign/coin attribution.

On 20th March 1413 Henry IV died and Henry V became king. With both monarchs' name being Henry the legend on the groats hardly changed; another problematic point which has divided numismatic opinion. Obverse dies that were still in use at the end of Henry IV's reign were recalled and a mullet mark was stamped over the pellet on the right of the king's bust. Many numismatists have long held the view that the mullet was Henry V's distinguishing emblem and was used to differentiate his issues from those of his father. Furthermore, a mullet or cinquefoil is noted in heraldry as a device often used to distinguish a son from his father on heraldic arms.

Stewartby's argument seems sound, as does Potter's take on the problem, but the academic world is famously slow to accept new theories and numismatics is no exception. If we were to accept the proposed new order then groats and halfgroats of the present Henry V class A and B would be placed in the reign of Henry IV. Only those coins featuring a mullet (class C) would remain as true Henry V coins. As both issues (A and B) are already rare, with class A exceptionally so, a change in catalogue listing would hardly alter the availability of the ever elusive and expensive coins of Henry IV. Time only will tell if this ongoing numismatic conundrum will be satisfactorily resolved.

The next issue will be in early **December**. As always, fresh articles, news items and members' personal news are welcome. I seem to have run out of relevant humour for this issue – any ideas?